

CHRIST IN POETRY AND ART.

School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1392015



IN VERSE  
BY *Samuel Wesley*

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1900a





# Christ in Poetry and Art

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**T**HIS great production of Wesley's is issued in the most superb style of the modern publisher's art. It covers over five hundred pages, and is divided into ten books or cantos, each of which is preceded by a table of contents and embellished with beautiful half-tone illustrations from paintings by famous artists.

It is replete with Bible references and explanatory notes elucidating important events in the life of our Saviour and altogether constitutes a valuable companion to the Bible. It makes a magnificent gift.

Its easy rhythm and lucid style make it a delight to the children as well as the scholar. It will be read by every member of the family not once, but many times, and many of its charming passages will be memorized—no more powerful factor could be introduced into the home circle for bending the youthful twig in the right direction. It charms the young reader and points the way to the higher life so clearly and so beautifully that through it thousands will be almost unconsciously led to Christ.

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## Introductory Note

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MORE than two hundred years have elapsed since Wesley's "Life of Christ" was first presented to the public, and nearly a hundred years since Bishop Coke published his revised edition.

How for more than a century "the mantle of oblivion was drawn over it, so that few, comparatively speaking, knew that such a poem existed," is related by Bishop Coke in the preface to his revised edition, which is reprinted herein immediately following this note.

It is a remarkable fact that some of the greatest literary productions of the world have been saved from oblivion by a mere accident or chance happening. So little was the literary merit of Milton's "Paradise Lost" recognized at the time it was written, that the author had great difficulty in finding a publisher. He finally sold the entire manuscript for ten pounds, or about fifty dollars. Even after the poem was published it was not appreciated by book reviewers or readers, and soon went out of print. Long after it had been forgotten Lord Dorset discovered an old copy of the poem in a second-hand bookstore, and it was given to him as waste paper. He recognized its merit, obtained the indorsement of literary critics, brought out a new edition, and the great poem was launched upon its career of glory. But for Lord Dorset's accidental



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finding of that old copy, "Paradise Lost" might have still been slumbering and forgotten. Its discovery and revival is now universally acknowledged to have been a most valuable service to the literature of the seventeenth century. But it was left to the closing years of the nineteenth century to witness a revival of even greater moment to Christian literature in this republication of Samuel Wesley's great epic poem, which was brought about very much after the manner in which "Paradise Lost" was recovered from oblivion. It found, indeed, a more ready welcome at its birth than did Milton's great effort, for its merit was immediately recognized by the literary critics of the day. The poet laureate pronounced it "the greatest of heroic poems," and King William III presented the author with the vicarage of Epworth in honor of his having written it. The poem was published under the patronage of royalty in two magnificent quarto volumes, which none but persons possessed of ample means could afford to own. When the royal editions (of which there were several) were exhausted, the poem dropped out of print, until one hundred years after its first appearance, when Bishop Thomas Coke brought out his revised edition, which was sold through restricted channels, thus preventing its reaching the masses, and therefore from becoming financially profitable to its publishers. So the great poem was again permitted to drop out of notice.

Some two years ago the editor of the present edition discovered in a second-hand bookstore an old copy of Bishop Coke's edition of the poem, and at once saw



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the literary merit of the work, and conceived the idea that an American edition in one volume at a price within the reach of the masses would not only constitute an invaluable service to Christian literature, but be appreciated by the American public, and meet with such a reception as to make its continued publication possible. He explained his discovery to the publishers, who coincided with his views, and the result is the restoration of this great Christian epic to the world of literature.

The poem, beyond all controversy, is unsurpassed in the literature of any language in its sublimity of theme, in the pathos of its episodes, and in the truth and vividness of the details of events of deepest interest to man. More than any other epic it appeals to that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin. It has been said of Shakespeare that he has revealed every impulse of human action and sounded every emotion of the human heart. So it may be truly said that Samuel Wesley, in "The Life of Christ," has laid bare the inmost workings of the divine mind, and more than any other writer, either of prose or poetry, has "justified the ways of God to man."

In a masterly and eloquent manner and in a more concise and connected form than is to be found anywhere else, the poem presents the entire earthly history of the Saviour, and contains valuable explanatory notes elucidating the various scenes and events related in the text, with citations to corresponding passages of Scripture. As thus annotated, the work constitutes a most admirable companion book to the Bible, and un-



# The Life of Christ

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## BOOK I

I sing the God, who, though enthroned on high,  
In human nature deigned to live and die:  
I sing the God each modest seraph sings,  
The most afflicted, yet the best of kings;  
Him, who from heaven to earth's vile shores came down,  
Without his sceptre, diadem, or crown,  
To banish Satan to the flames below,  
And rescue mortals from impending woe.  
Pain marked his steps in his incarnate state,  
But godlike patience made him truly great.  
To close our wounds he poured his precious blood,  
And with his life procured our peace with God.  
In his example we distinctly see  
What Jesus was and what we ought to be.  
He taught us precepts disbelieved before,  
And gave his life when he could give no more.  
Hence a new era in the world began,  
And Heaven descended to reside with man;  
The golden age appeared again restored,  
And saints and angels hailed their common Lord.  
What seers predicted stood revealed to sight,  
While earth from heaven received auspicious light;  
Reviving hope began afresh to bloom,  
And faith's strong optics pierced beyond the tomb.



From these few specimen pages it will be seen that the poem is in no sense a theological work, but simply a presentation in classical verse of the gospel scheme of redemption through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It has been said of Shakespeare that he has touched every spring of human action and sounded every emotion of the human heart. So it may be said as truly of Samuel Wesley that in "The Life of Christ" he has revealed the inmost workings of the divine mind, and more than any other writer, in poetry or prose, has "justified the ways of God to man."



These pages, 78 to 85, will give the reader some slight conception of the touching pathos with which Joseph relates to his friends the modest story of his love-life with Mary. No love story of fiction was ever told in such exquisite language — so intensely realistic, yet so charmingly ideal, transfigured as it were by the magic charm of poetry. But no description can convey any adequate idea of the beauty of the story as told in the words of the poet.



## The Life of Christ

And but for these some truths you would receive  
Hard to relate, but harder to believe.  
But those who see what fills the list'ning earth,  
Will credit prodigies which marked his birth :  
Nor will your judgments think my language wrong,  
While I relate what dropped from Joseph's tongue ;  
Oft have I heard the good old man repeat  
When half reclined upon an oozy seat  
Against the sounding beach in peace we lay  
To taste the breeze which closed the scorching day,  
The wond'rous miracles which marked his life,  
Urged him to take, and to suspect his wife.  
Once I remember in the evening air,  
When he and I and Zebedee were there,  
We pressed him all to tell us what he knew  
Of that conception all acknowledged true.  
He gave consent, and, leaning on his side,  
Drew this description of himself and bride :—

“ Know then, he said, when youth's fresh blossoms  
past  
Had brought of seven sabbatic years the last,<sup>10</sup>  
Advised by friends, I sought a virtuous wife  
To share the fortunes and fatigues of life.  
From all that Nazareth had counted fair,  
And many virgins bloomed in beauty there,

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph, it is probable, was a middle-aged person at the time of his marriage. The sabbatic year is either the seventh year, or seven years, a week of years: suppose him then born in the last of the first sabbath, or the very seventh, or sabbatic year, he might be now something above forty.



## The Life of Christ

Old Heli's daughter far outshone the rest,<sup>11</sup>  
And all her image on my soul impressed.  
From the same source our kindred blood we drew,  
And our descent can be unknown to few.  
From David he by Nathan brings his line,  
And I by Solomon deducing mine.  
As joined the roots, so now the branches join,  
And, though obscure, the impulse seemed divine.  
Gladly he gives what I as gladly take,  
And both well pleased the solemn contract make.  
But rivals sought to snatch her from my breast,  
And envy thought me too supremely bless'd.  
Her virtuous fame engrossed the public voice,  
And all united to applaud my choice.

“Judge then the anguish of my laboring breast,  
When in my arms the lovely maid I pressed.  
Frozen with horror, stupid with amaze,  
I gazed, suspected, and renewed my gaze;  
Believed and doubted, disbelieved and feared  
The grave in which I saw my hopes interred.  
Thus he who holds a serpent in his arms  
Forgets its poison to admire its charms;  
Sees it unfold its deleterious spring,  
And with its fangs inflict a mortal sting;  
Then as the venom rankles in his veins,  
He spurns the reptile, while he writhes with pains.  
Thus did I feel the intellectual sore  
In due proportion as I loved before.

<sup>11</sup>Heli is said to have been the father of the blessed Virgin.  
See *Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History*.



## The Life of Christ

"Struck with such proofs as would not let me err,  
I felt indignant at her sex and her;  
While love and vengeance in my soul debate,  
But love detained me, though I strove to hate.  
Resolved at length, if possible to part,  
And extricate my too-deluded heart,  
To tear by force her perjured image thence,  
Already blasted by lost innocence,  
I left the room in darkness and despair  
To shun those tears which flowed to keep me there;  
But feeling rev'rence for her father's fame,  
I labored to conceal her guilt and shame,  
To wait awhile for some convenient hour,  
And then in private put her from my door.\*

"Determined thus, I rushed in haste away,  
And on the ground a widowed bridegroom lay;  
There mourned my fate (for gentle sleep had fled)  
With restless thoughts upon a thorny bed,  
And in those shadows which preclude the light  
In sighs and groans prolonged the tedious night.  
Twice had the cheerful harbinger of day  
Marked the dull hours to chase the shades away,  
When grief exhausted left my flowing eyes,  
And sudden slumbers seized me by surprise.  
Thus sunk in sweet forgetfulness of grief,  
A cordial powerful to yield relief,  
Around my head some beaming glories play,  
Which seemed a prelude to eternal day.

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\* Matt. i. 19.



## The Life of Christ

I then beheld a glorious watcher sent,\*  
For nothing less it proved by the event.  
His purple wings dispelled the morning shade,  
And gave me comfort by the light they made.  
Then, while his voice and looks assailed my heart,  
His heavenly accents did these truths impart:—

“‘Illustrious branch of Jesse’s noble stem,  
And heir of David’s throne and diadem,  
What thoughts disconsolate, or restless fear,  
From thy fair bride detain thee mourning here?  
Her soul is free from those unchaste desires  
Or guilty deeds which fan unholy fires.  
As for the root of all thy jealous cares,  
The sacred burden which the virgin bears,  
The Holy Spirit did the gift infuse,  
And sent an angel to impart the news  
To her and thee,—and ere the changing moon  
Five courses more, renewed with light, has run,  
Her womb shall teem with an illustrious birth,  
That brings salvation to the sinful earth.  
His name is JESUS, sacredly designed  
A mighty Saviour to redeem mankind.’

“Thus having said, the angel disappears;  
But all he uttered sounded in my ears.  
In unknown paths my understanding roved  
Between the vision and the maid I loved.  
Roused from my couch, in trembling haste I come

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\* Matt. i. 20.



## The Life of Christ

With sacred horror to the nuptial room,  
And, like a statue frozen at the door,  
Beheld the object whom I loved before.  
Here Joseph's warmth some tender things expressed,  
A lover's feelings must describe the rest.

“Awakened Mary lay dissolved in tears,  
And stretched her hand to dissipate my fears.  
Thus the sweet rose new paints its lovely hue,  
When bending with big drops of morning dew!  
Thus Mary's beauties stood afresh displayed,  
And gathered lustre from the tears she shed!  
Nearer I drew, solicitous to know  
If joy or grief had made these sluices flow,—  
If sorrow softened her dear weeping eyes,  
Or her rapt soul dissolved in ecstasies.  
For, since the vision, these my thoughts employ,  
But faith afforded me a source of joy.  
On my approach, the blush that decked her face,  
I soon discerned, was all from pow'rful grace;  
While the soft moisture which her eyes impart,  
Came from those raptures which she felt at heart.

“A mutual pause succeeded, ere to break  
The awful silence she assayed to speak.  
She then conjured me, if I held her dear,  
To wait with patience her defense to hear.  
Insist no more, I cried, on thy defense,  
For Heaven vouchsafes to clear thy innocence.  
An angel-form, not Mary's self more fair,  
Did all the secrets of thy soul declare,



## The Life of Christ

And in a vision of the recent night,  
Put my suspicions and my fears to flight.  
Then dry those tears, and henceforth cease to grieve,  
For he who censured asks thee to forgive.

“‘Then Heaven,’ she cried, ‘has shown what I  
concealed;  
The mighty secret is at last revealed,  
Which would require, should I attempt to tell,  
To gain belief another miracle.’

“By our chaste loves, I said, much injured fair,  
And by this offspring thou art bless’d to bear,  
Disclose thy soul, nor my suspicions fear,  
Since Heaven instructs me strange events to hear.  
And if my judgment does not lead me wrong,  
A train of miracles must guide thy tongue.

“‘Know then,’ she said, ‘three moons are fully gone,  
Indeed the fourth is swiftly rolling on,  
Since in my father’s house I sat engaged,  
Revolving on the great event presaged,  
When some great monarch of mysterious birth  
Shall raise a kingdom and reform the earth.  
This promised Prince, this Heaven’s Almighty Heir,  
Engrossed my thoughts, and strangely claimed my care;  
Who faith, and truth, and justice should maintain,  
And bless all nature with his peaceful reign;  
When streams of honey from the rocks shall flow,  
And palms and roses in the desert grow.  
Supremely blessed I thought and counted her,



## The Life of Christ

Who at her breast the Prince of Life should bear;  
And pleased, I fancied humble gifts to bring  
To greet and decorate the infant king;—  
Thought, if I might within my arms enfold,  
Or in his cradle innocently bold  
Seize the young hero, shelter him from harms,  
Kiss his soft cheeks, and gaze upon his charms,  
No monarch's consort should my rival prove  
In grateful songs, felicity, and love.

“While musing thus, a tide of glory came,  
And filled my chamber with celestial flame.  
Then from the skies a youth, with sunbeams crowned,  
Perfumed the air, and cast his smiles around.  
He seemed more lovely than the race of man,  
And having bowed, his message thus began:  
“Hail, highly favored, blessed with truth and grace,\*  
By heaven selected from the human race;  
Who, nobly honored, must that mother prove  
Whom thou so lately didst admire and love.  
Nor needst thou blush at what my lips declare;  
Thy virgin womb the infant God must bear,—  
That promised Prince who shall the world regain,  
And over all his Father's empire reign.  
Nay, do not ask how this can be performed,  
For I perceive thy chastity alarmed;  
A power divine shall prove my message true,  
And power omnipotent can wonders do.  
The Holy Ghost, the quintessence of love,  
Shall breath conception on thee from above.

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\* Luke i. 26.



## The Life of Christ

Thy holy offspring JESUS shall be named,  
By saints revered, by distant ages famed.  
Thus God appears in human flesh confined,  
And thus becomes the Saviour of mankind.  
But if thy faith demand some evidence,  
Indulgent heaven has sent the proof from sense.  
Thy aged cousin,<sup>12</sup> who in deep despair  
Long sighed like Sarah to embrace an heir,  
In silver locks at length is pregnant grown,  
And in three months shall strangely bear a son.  
Truth guides my tongue; the facts which I have given  
Shall be accomplished by the hand of heaven."

" 'He said, and paused: I hastened to reply,  
When lo! his pinions bore him to the sky.  
Amazed, I viewed, as o'er the clouds he trod,  
This strange but sacred messenger of God,  
And cried, My faith I can no more suspend  
At what my reason can not comprehend.  
Be God's decrees fulfilled without delay,  
Let him command, his handmaid shall obey.

" 'Scarce had I spoke and Gabriel disappeared,  
Ere a delightful whispering sound I heard,  
Like what a solitary ear perceives  
When gentle breezes fan the velvet leaves.  
Again celestial fragrances perfume  
And scatter paradise around the room.  
Thus far I know, but can no more explain;

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<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth.

## The Life of Christ

He then arose from the deep gloom he made,  
To hide his shame in her unconscious shade;  
His livid form with smothered sulphur crowned,  
His glaring eyeballs blasted all the ground;  
His furious soul rekindled all its hate,  
And poured strange curses on the hand of fate.  
Incensed to madness, he the signal gave,  
And called his demons from each lonely grave;  
An instant council he designed to form,  
To fight in ambush, or assault by storm.  
From earth to hell the demons haste away,  
Ambitious Belial, lustful Asmoday,  
And haughty Moloch, taller than the rest;  
Their looks and forms their various ranks expressed.  
Each wretch they leave, whom they in triumph led  
Through the pale mansions of the silent dead;  
All seemed more dreadful than when first they fell,  
And gave new horrors to the glooms of hell.  
But most the looks of hell's dread prince surprise,  
Nor durst the conclave meet his burning eyes;  
None could accost the dreadful tyrant;—none  
But crouched, and sighed, and trembled round his throne.  
At length the fiend, that foe of God and man,  
Unsealed his lips and thus enraged began:—

“Dishonored angels! whither are we led,  
What cursèd power has struck our virtue dead?  
Are we so tame, so worthy more than hell,  
We dare no more against our foes rebel?  
Are all your counsels to submit and yield,  
And to a vagrant leave unfought the field?



## The Life of Christ

On earth's wide coast must Satan's empire fall,  
And Mary's Son possess the spacious ball?  
Oh, foul disgrace! forbid it fate, that we  
So long in vain have tasted liberty!  
He can but thunder and full well we know,  
By past experience, what his bolts can do.  
Shall earth-born man so oft his vengeance dare,  
While made the object of peculiar care;  
And we relent, who have been basely driven  
With peals of thunder from the verge of heaven?  
Will you forget the cause in which you fell,  
And praise the despot in the flames of hell?  
Must I forsake and abdicate my throne,  
And for a monarch this young Saviour own?  
Like you resolve to join the earth-born race,  
Shed tears, and pray, and supplicate for grace?  
Why else is nothing either done or said,  
Worthy yourselves, your empire, or your head?  
Go then, ye cowards, and ignobly fawn,  
And, bound in shackles, lick the despot's throne!'

"Infernal Moloch could no longer bear,  
But rose convulsed with fury and despair.  
Such were his looks, and such his furious eyes,  
When Heaven in anger hurled him from the skies!  
'A charge so daring,' he exclaimed, 't is well  
That he who utters reigns enthroned in hell;  
From any else, one half of this should cost  
More than in heaven the most exalted lost.  
For our exertions are these legions prized  
No more, than basely to be stigmatized

The illustrations in this work are executed from celebrated paintings by famous artists, most of them being from the more recent productions of modern painters, and are more realistic than the paintings of the old masters. Notice, for instance, this picture of "The Holy Mother." It is a perfect piece of realism. Christ's mother was an Eastern woman, and as such the artist has painted her. See how the Oriental costume and surroundings are brought in as accessories to the picture. The illustrations throughout the work are of a like character and give a clear conception of the incidents related in the poem. These are only samples of the collection of masterpieces found in the entire work.







*From painting by A. Melli.*

THE ANNOUNCING ANGEL





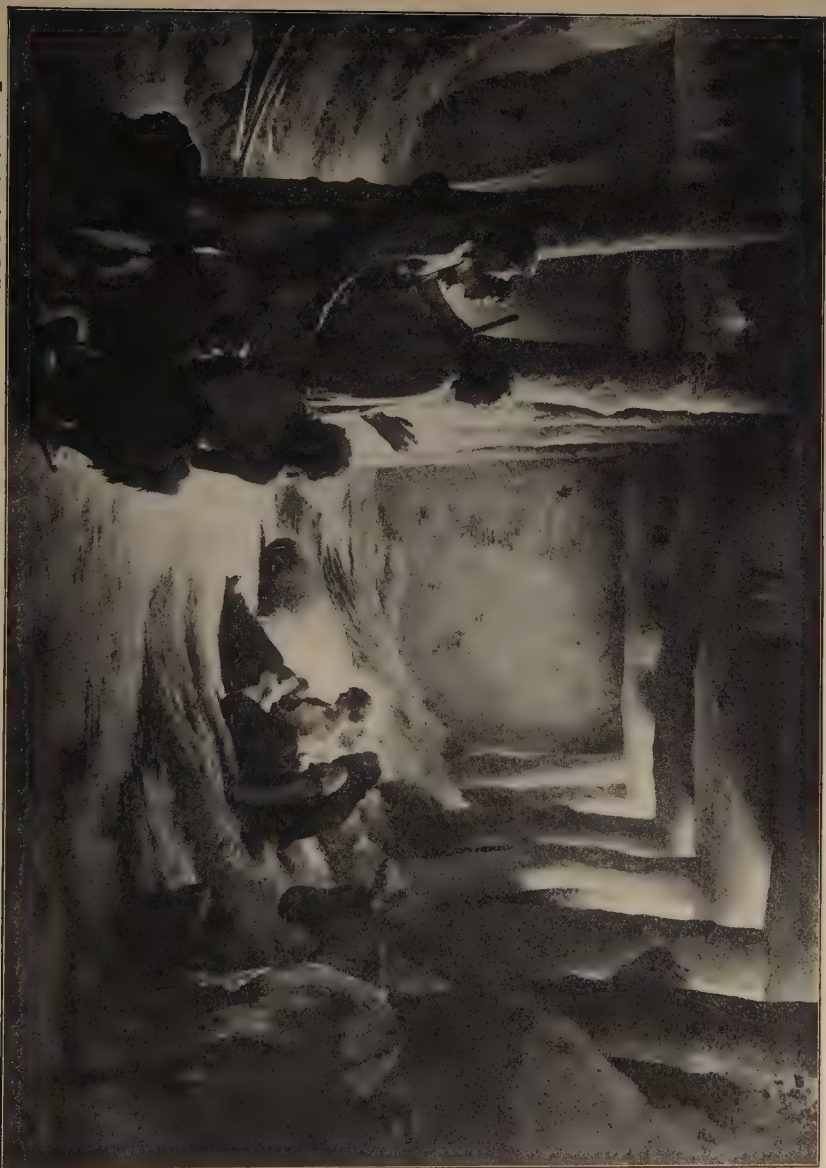


*from painting by Goodall.*

THE HOLY MOTHER







*From painting by La Roche.*

THE NATIVITY.—VISIT OF THE SHEPHERDS







*From painting by Antonio Ciseri.*

BEHOLD THE MAN.







*From painting by Richter.*

# THE RAISING OF JAIRUS'S DAUGHTER







*From painting by Kirchbach.*

# CHRIST CASTING OUT THE MONEY CHANGERS







*From painting by Hoffmann.*

"LET HIM WHO IS WITHOUT SIN CAST THE FIRST STONE."







*From painting by Hofmann.*

CHRIST TAKING LEAVE OF HIS MOTHER





*From painting by Mantegna.*

## THE CRUCIFIXION







*From painting by Alex Ender.*

HOLY WOMEN AT THE TOMB.







*From painting by Thomson*

FIRST EASTER DAWN.



## The Life of Christ

With feeble penitence? Can that be borne  
In hell, which ev'n the earthly tyrants scorn?  
But words are vain: We all of us are true,  
Sworn foes to heaven and earth, and friends to you.  
Such deeds await us as shall spread our fame,  
And hell shall blazon Moloch's glorious name.  
On Jordan's margins, which we lately roved  
To aid that cause which we so long have loved,  
I then a haughty Pharisee possessed,  
And lodged a darling viper in his breast;  
And while our leader watched the doubtful day,  
Belial unseen within another lay.  
We heard the thunder, and the oral sound,  
And saw great Satan mounting from the ground.  
But still we stayed Christ's secret haunts to know,  
And watch the movements of our deadly foe;  
We saw his footsteps to the desert bend,  
And marked the angels who on him attend.  
To his retreats all anxious to pursue,  
We stand prepared, and wait commands from you.  
I to destroy him will the forests fire,  
In which, if man, he must in flames expire;  
But if these flames should unsuccessful prove,  
The solid earth shall from its axis move;  
The mighty mass shall to the centre rive,  
And in the gulf entomb him yet alive;  
Or rising whirlwinds rocks and hills displace,  
And dash all Pisgah on his mangled face.'

"He said, and paused, nor would for orders stay,  
Till Satan rose to interrupt his way.



## The Life of Christ

'To me alone,' the gloomy tyrant cries,  
Belongs the glory of the enterprise;  
I go at once to finish the design;  
Mine be the honor, as the danger mine:  
Soon heaven in mourning hell shall see with joy,  
And take the life of this ill-fated boy.'

"Thus having said, the sooty conclave rose,  
And to the wild, disguised, their leader goes;  
Who, on arriving at the forest, found  
The Saviour prostrate on the dewy ground;  
He, rapt in thought, his spotless prayer preferred  
Against the onset which the tempter dared;  
In which we see a bright example given,  
That man, when tempted, might apply to Heaven:  
Thus to instruct us, and mark out our road,  
He asked as man what he might take as God.

"Soon did the tempter find his effort fail;  
O'er those who pray, he never can prevail!  
Yet still he tempted, and his darts preferred,  
And vainly hoped to find him off his guard;  
Each secret art and strategem he tries,  
False hopes, and joys, and vanities to raise;  
Objects within, and those before his face,—  
The solitude and horrors of the place:—  
The gloomy darkness, and the gathering storm,—  
And lightnings' glare which heaven's fair face deform:  
But all his arts the tempter only mock,  
Or fall like hail against the solid rock;  
Each rude assault unmoved the Saviour bore,

Pages 152 and 155 give portions of a debate at a midnight conclave of fallen angels. This entire debate, though given in metrical rhyme, breathes all the fiery eloquence of Milton's most labored efforts. Nothing in the entire range of epic or dramatic poetry exceeds in devilish grandeur Moloch's defiant response to the taunting harangue of Lucifer. He is for undertaking the destruction of the Saviour at once, but Lucifer forbids him, bars the way, and sets out upon the undertaking himself. Then begins his various temptations of Christ.

Pages 160 to 168 show passages from the story of Christ's temptations by Satan. Having failed to induce Christ to work a miracle by turning stones into bread, on the approach of night Satan raises a tempest and tries to frighten the Saviour into submission, but without success. The next morning he accosts the Saviour in a glorious form, pretends to be a lover of man, and especially of Christ, and offers him a banquet in the midst of a paradise raised in the wilderness. The various other temptations are all recounted in a similar entrancing manner.



## The Life of Christ

We kill those scruples which would murder mirth,  
And for the palate give inventions birth.  
Yet for these deeds we stand condemned to bear  
The crimes of men, in which we scarcely share.  
If then for these, ungrateful as they are,  
We watch all anxious and such gifts prepare,  
How much on thee must every heart bestow  
To meet thy wants and cancel what we owe!  
Nor can we fear thou wilt unthankful prove.  
And with ingratitude requite our love.  
Full well I know thee, though the Son of God,  
Both cold and hungry in this wild abode;  
And though thy wisdom or thy power denied  
The poor old hermit who for bread applied,  
My gifts, unasked, thine eyes shall quickly see,  
In rich profusion kept in store for thee.'

"Thus having said, there instantly arose  
Scenes, such as would an Eden recompose;  
The sturdy oak, the all-enlivening pine,  
The stately cedar formed for work divine;  
The shady chestnut, and the walnut fair,  
And fragrant lotus, spread their branches there;—  
The virtuous palm, which does by pressure rise,  
And lift its head towards the bending skies;  
The lovely cherry reddening with a blush,  
The golden quince which hung from every bush;  
The silken peach with noble flavor blessed,  
The plum whose name Armenian fields confessed;  
The juicy mulberry, which, fables feign,  
From blood of lovers drew its purple stain:—

## The Life of Christ

On every side the mantling vineyard spread,  
And pendant grapes hung clustering round his head.  
Unnumbered flowers to entertain the guest  
Rose from the ground to decorate the feast.  
These humbly creep to deck the arbor's side,  
Those mount on high and glow with native pride;  
And with such art were all with fruit combined,  
That the same hand might flowers and clusters find.

“Not far from these, all open to the view,  
In spicy groves the golden orange grew;  
The silver lemon next, and next to these  
The rich pomegranate from beyond the seas;  
This was at first from punic Carthage brought,  
But bore a part in what the tempter wrought.  
Beneath their feet a carpet chiefly green  
Showed nature's nice embroidery between;  
While every hue so exquisitely grew,  
As if the landscape art and nature drew.  
Around the arbor in large tufts arose  
The valley's lily and sweet Sharon's rose,  
The jasmine, camphire, nard, each fragrant sweet,  
Which in the spouse's garden are presumed to meet.  
While mossy benches, which might monarchs please,  
Spread their soft laps as if to promise ease

“Full in the midst a costly table stood,  
Laden with fruit and every kind of food.  
The middle part a forest boar sustained,  
And costly dishes covered what remained,  
Such as the taste, and smell, and eyes invite,

Here we have a page from St. John's account of the mysteries of the Christian faith, and the person of Christ, which the poet represents the beloved disciple as setting forth in a Pindaric ode, asserting the divinity and eternity of the Saviour, as he has done in his gospel and epistles. These Pindaric stanzas have been greatly praised by literary critics for the boldness of thought and propriety of expression which they exhibit on the most sublime of all occasions.



## The Life of Christ

Th' Almighty to perfection ever knew;  
But he himself has said it, and it must be true.  
The Father's image He, as great, as bright,  
Clothed in the same insufferable light;  
More closely joined, more intimately one  
With his great Father, than the light and sun.<sup>10</sup>  
Equal in goodness, and in might,  
True God of God, and Light of Light.  
Him with the Father we adore  
There is no after or before.<sup>11</sup>  
Equal in their existence they have been;  
Nor ever did the Son begin;  
No room for one short moment, or bold thought  
between.<sup>12</sup>

### III.

"The Father loved the Son; the Spirit came  
From their conspiring mutual flame,  
From both proceeding, yet with both the same.  
Equal to God and the eternal Word,

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<sup>10</sup> This usually is given as an illustration of the Trinity, and particularly the procession of the Son from the Father; though it must come infinitely short.

<sup>11</sup> That is, all the divine persons were coexistent from all eternity, and do now equally partake of the divine essence and perfections.

<sup>12</sup> The Arians, who had much more to say for their heresy than their modern kindred, did grant, in some of their confessions of faith that the Son was from all eternity, by such an emanation from the Father as that whereby the light proceeds from the sun; but yet contended for a moment's difference between their existence; the Son receiving his, as they think, from the Father; whereby they unavoidably fell into the same absurdity which other pretenders to reason since have done; that, I mean, of a made God, or a subordinate supreme.

This page gives a portion of the eloquent speech delivered at a meeting of the Sanhedrim by Joseph of Arimathea in reply to a speech of Caiaphas attacking the Saviour. Nicodemus had begun a timid defense of Christ, when Joseph interrupted him and boldly before them all confessed the Saviour, and distinctly answered all the cavils of Caiaphas against Christ's person and teachings, and urged the Sanhedrim to accept him as their true Messiah. The entire debate is exceedingly animated, ingenious, and thrillingly interesting.

## The Life of Christ

“That cautious fear of censure is not mine,  
To own a Master who appears divine.  
Let naked truth prevail, plain, natural sense,  
Without the gaudy paint of eloquence.  
Though interest suffer, or though pride repine,  
I own him, I confess him; Lord, I'm thine;—  
He came from heaven—his laws must be divine.  
I love my country, but his name adore;  
Feel much for rites, but feel for justice more.  
This sterling motive is my sole pretense  
For rising thus to speak in his defense.  
Can int'rest prompt the person you despise  
To mask his vices in a deep disguise?  
Can he relax those laws his words dispense,  
Or be rewarded to delude our sense;  
Destroy those virtues which his life proclaims,  
Or undermine the truths at which he aims?  
This seems the most improbable pretense  
That e'er was palmed on spotless innocence.  
How oft to law and prophets he appeals,  
Myself have heard; nor other truths reveals,  
But what within our sacred volumes lie,  
Though veiled till now in clouds and mystery  
How oft has he (I still my witness give,  
Which till this hour you would not disbelieve)  
Declared one tittle should not pass away  
Till this vast frame of heaven and earth decay!  
We are but men, nor all things can discern;  
Are we too wise from Heaven itself to learn?  
When the orac'lous ephod used to shine,  
Did any doubt the characters divine?



That Christ should have revealed himself to the repentant Magdalene first of all after his resurrection, is one of the most comforting thoughts to those whose lives have gone wrong, that is to be derived from the entire life and teachings of the Saviour. It is the sign by which he shows to the world that he "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Mary, in her anxiety and confusion, had mistaken the Saviour for the gardener, whom she asks to show her to what place Christ's body has been removed, for she had found the stone rolled away and the body gone from the sepulcher. Moved to compassion by her distraction, Christ reveals his identity. Notice with what delicacy and propriety of expression the poet has related this touching incident.

## The Life of Christ

Tell me in pity where his limbs are laid,  
For my last sighs and tears are yet unpaid.  
There I" — The Saviour could no longer bear,  
But in her pangs sustained an equal share;  
Around his temples beamed some sacred rays,  
And in his face she saw the Godhead blaze.  
Her honored Lord she recognized and knew,  
And at his feet herself in transports threw;  
And, feeling joys too vast to be expressed,  
"Master!" she cried, and spoke in looks the rest.  
Her Lord salutes her with his radiant eyes,  
And adds in words — "Suspend thy ecstasies.  
Go, tell my brethren that I hold them dear,  
Though partly sunk in unbelief and fear;"  
And having charged her this request to bear,  
Glides from her sight in fields of trackless air.

When she arrived and told what she had seen,  
All were incredulous as she had been;  
They thought the vision by her fancy made,  
Or conjured up by some delusive shade.  
Yet quite alarmed with such uncommon news,  
They half acknowledge what they half refuse;  
And in this strait resolved to ascertain  
A fact which none were able to explain.  
John, while the others much attention lend,  
Seemed most concerned, as Christ was most his friend.  
Cephas stood next, who, rising from the fall,  
In faith and courage seemed a spur to all:  
Thus broken bones, by skillful artists dressed,  
And set again, grow stronger than the rest.

Where in the entire range of literature, ancient or modern, can be found such touching pathos as is expressed in the lines of the poet describing Christ's sympathy for his friends, Martha, and Mary, in their hour of saddest bereavement (pages 44-46). Note the tender impressiveness of his words in relating the story of how Christ wept with the bereaved sisters of Lazarus in their hour of sorrow, although he knew that within the next hour he was to restore the dead brother to their arms alive and well. Wesley was a masterhand at painting the tender sentiments and emotions of humanity.

## The Life of Christ

His weeping friends to his sad house return,  
Condole the sisters, and their losses mourn.  
But while they poured their lamentations here,  
The tidings reached them that our Lord was near.  
Martha, on this, her godlike guest to meet,  
Left her companions, and embraced his feet;  
And while recounting their disaster, cried,  
“Hadst thou been here, my brother had not died;  
And even now, such is my faith’s degree,  
Ask what thou wilt, and God will give it thee.”  
The Saviour, struck with sympathetic pain,  
Replied, “Thy brother shall revive again.”

Attentive Martha listened to her Lord,  
Then ran to Mary with his gracious word;  
But still her faith directed her to view  
That final hour when all must find it true.  
The mourning fair some pious Jews attend,  
And praise the deeds of their departed friend;  
Recount his virtues, his good actions tell,  
And only sigh to live and die as well.  
When these perceived that Mary went in haste,  
They also rose, not knowing what had passed,  
And fully bent to soothe the weeping pair,  
Walked to the grave to pour their sorrows there.  
Mary, whom Martha to the Saviour bore,  
Fell at his feet as Martha fell before;  
And prostrate there in plaintive accents cried,  
“Hadst thou been here, my brother had not died.”  
The mournful group the general grief expressed,



## The Life of Christ

And Jesus groaning wept among the rest:<sup>12</sup>  
The woes of man his tender passions moved;  
He wept like man the loss of what he loved.  
Again he wept, and asked where Lazarus lay,  
Devoid of life, a sordid lump of clay.  
Too well they knew the margin of the cave,  
And showed the marble that concealed his grave.  
With sighs suppressed, he heaved an inward groan,  
And bade the people roll away the stone.  
Martha, not yet perceiving his intent,  
Anxious to please, yet willing to prevent,  
Spoke, paused, lamented, hesitated, sighed,  
“’Tis now so long, dear Master, since he died,  
That putrid steams must needs infect the air,  
Which neither thou nor these his friends can bear.”  
Jesus replied, “Believe, and wonders see,  
And humbly these events consign to me.”

The stone removed, to Heaven he lifts his eyes,  
And prays a while to him who formed the skies;  
Then turning boldly to the lifeless clay,  
Before spectators in the face of day,  
Lifted that voice which ancient silence broke,

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<sup>12</sup> He groaned, John xi. 33, wept, 35. And here I need not tell any judicious reader that I feel myself fall infinitely short of the history, which I think has the most tenderness in it of any in the whole Bible, excepting perhaps that of our Saviour's commending his mother to his friend from the cross, in the ninth book. Nor can scarcely anything be a greater argument of our Saviour's kindness and goodness to mankind, than his being thus concerned at his friends' misfortunes, even when he knew that he should so soon remove them.



## The Life of Christ

That Heaven and earth might witness what he spoke;  
Then, with that power which gave creation birth,  
Pronounced augustly, "Lazarus, come forth!"

The piercing accents entered death's dark bed,  
And from its slumbers woke the trembling dead;  
Bound hands and feet, reviving Lazarus moved,  
And asked assistance from the friends he loved;  
These, while their looks astonishment betray,  
Unloosed his fetters, and he walked away.  
The gath'ring crowds with stupid wonder gazed,  
Looked on each other, then on Christ, amazed.  
A bursting joy from all exclaimed, "He lives!  
Dread Son of God," they shout again, "he lives!"  
Upon his neck the ravished sisters fell,  
And claimed almost another miracle  
Them from their furious transports to revive,  
Half dead with joy that Lazarus was alive.

Christ from the crowd immediately withdraws,  
At once to escape his foes, and shun applause;  
For in proportion to the good he wrought  
The Jewish elders his destruction sought.  
Hence to the wilderness a tour he made,  
And found a shelter in the desert shade.  
In pious deeds his happy moments spent,  
And scattered miracles where'er he went;  
He lived secluded till that day was nigh  
When to redeem us he was doomed to die;  
But then returned to suffer, and fulfill  
The high commands of his great Father's will.





